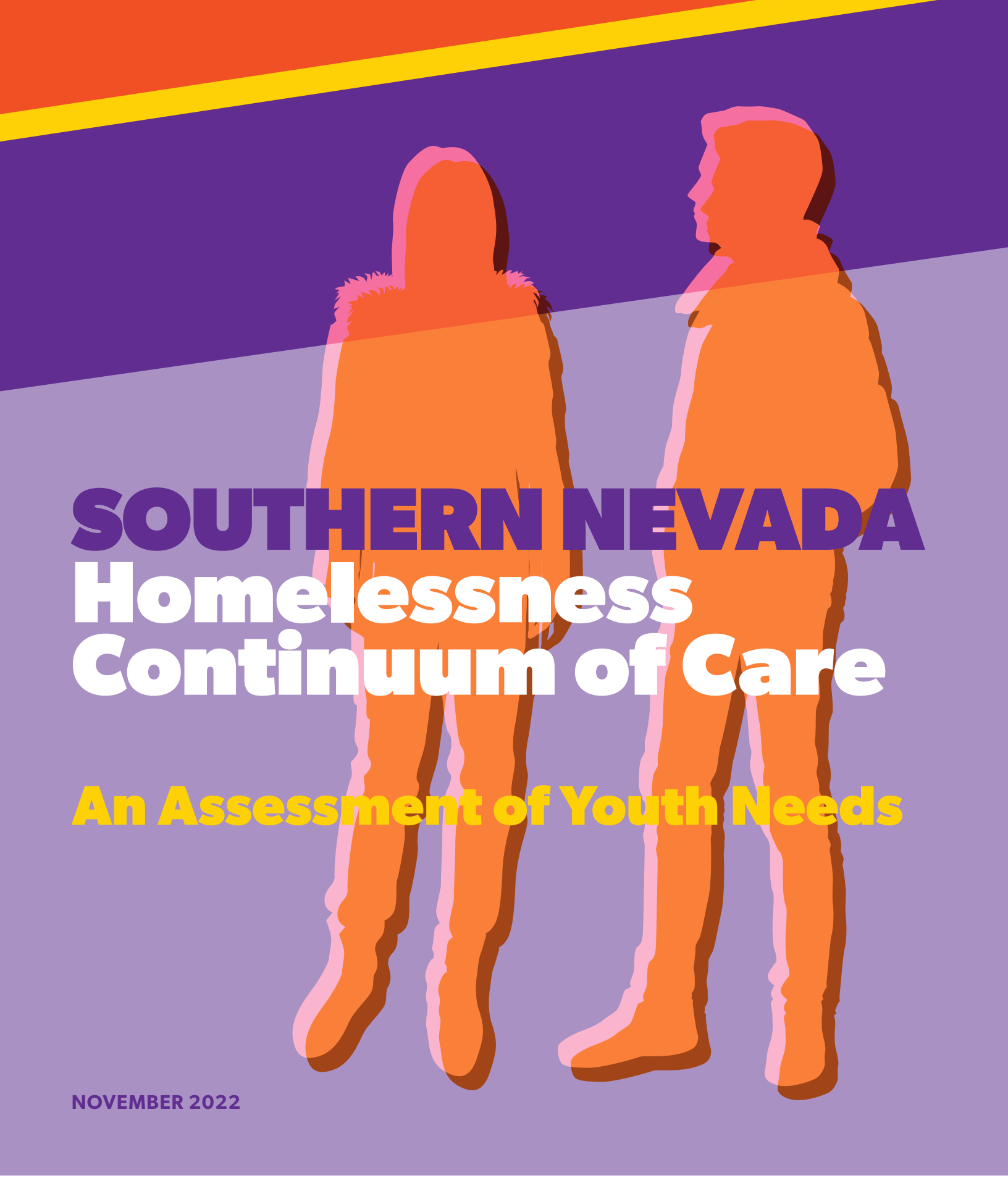


SOUTHERN NEVADA Homelessness Continuum of Care

An Assessment of Youth Needs

NOVEMBER 2022

#bethemovement
to end youth homelessness in Southern Nevada

Help Hope Home
Ending Homelessness in Southern Nevada

introduction

In order to pursue the work of preventing and ending youth homelessness, a community must first investigate the scope of the issue, the needs of its unaccompanied young people, and the primary challenges and opportunities of the systems with which those young people interact. In 2018, the Movement to End Youth Homelessness in Southern Nevada (the Movement), a cross-sector initiative to build a focused and sustained effort to end youth homelessness in the region, engaged in a community-wide planning process with this very goal, culminating in the publication of the first-ever Southern Nevada Plan to End Youth Homelessness. In addition to identifying the needs of Clark County's unaccompanied young people and establishing goals, objectives, and strategies to address them, the Plan outlined a model for engaging in continuous quality improvement (CQI). CQI refers to the process of making data-informed decisions that will bring about meaningful change, and then continuing to learn from and further develop those decisions over time. In the spring of 2022, the Southern Nevada Homelessness Continuum of Care (SNH CoC), in collaboration with the Movement, hired the Technical Assistance Collaborative (TAC) to complete a youth needs assessment as part of the CQI process.

This assessment was developed in partnership with a group of dedicated community members who served as the CQI team. CQI team participants included youth with lived expertise; Clark County Social Service staff; youth homeless service providers; University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) evaluators; Clark County School District representation; Child Welfare representation; Juvenile Justice representation; and data experts from the CoC's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) administrator. The CQI team engaged in biweekly meetings facilitated by TAC between June and October of 2022. The team's work was focused primarily on exploring data collection methods and analyzing data received. In addition to working alongside the CQI team, TAC independently conducted interviews and focus groups with key community stakeholders and young people with lived expertise.

This assessment highlights a collection of both quantitative and qualitative data about the number of youth who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness in Clark County; the demographic characteristics and primary needs of those youth; and the resource and system gaps that act as barriers to their stability.

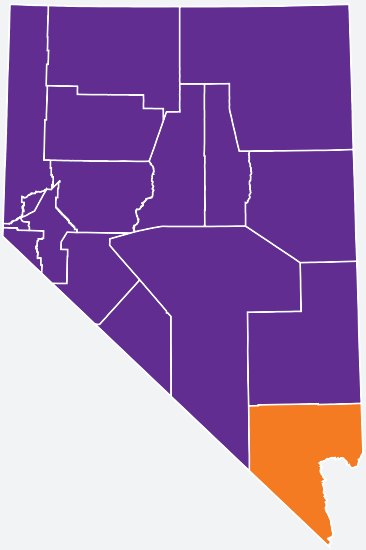
Background

The SNH CoC covers the full geography of Clark County, the state's most populous county. Census estimates from July 2021 indicate a population of close to 2.3 million people.[1] According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition's (NLIHC) ***Out of Reach*** report, approximately 45 percent of households in the county are renters. Renter households in Clark County are feeling the effects of record rent increases and rising evictions that are plaguing the housing market nationally. Nevada as a whole is one of 18 states in which, based on NLIHC's calculations, a person must earn an hourly wage of over $23.00 to afford a two-bedroom rental unit without spending more than 30 percent of their income on rent. Since the minimum wage in Nevada is currently $10.50 per hour, and the average renter's wage in Clark County is estimated to be $20.45 per hour, many renters are likely paying more than 30 percent of their monthly income toward rental costs.[2]

Nevada has the country's most severe shortage of rental homes affordable and available to extremely low-income households; that shortage totals approximately 84,000 units. NLIHC also estimates that 81.5 percent of extremely low-income Nevadans are paying more than half of their income toward their monthly rent.[3] The data on home ownership paints an equally bleak picture. According to ATTOM, a real estate data company, Clark County has had one of the fastest-rising mortgage rates since 2021. ATTOM's data on the first quarter of 2022 shows that the average cost of a single-family home in Clark County is $410,000, up 26.2 percent from last year, while wages have only grown by 7.1 percent since 2021.[4] It is important to understand that while there are a number of factors contributing to youth homelessness in Clark County, all of them are set against the backdrop of an extremely challenging housing market.

Chapin Hall's Voices of Youth Count Comprehensive Report, published in 2017, estimates that 4.2 million youth and young adults experience homelessness in the United States in any given year. This number is inclusive of unaccompanied minors (youth ages 13–17 who are not accompanied by a parent or guardian), unaccompanied youth ages 18–24, and unaccompanied pregnant and parenting youth.[5] This national issue presents itself differently in rural communities versus urban communities, though urban and rural youth are equally likely to experience homelessness. In both settings, youth homelessness is often invisible, limiting attempts to fully capture accurate data. Youth find creative solutions to avoid unsheltered and street homelessness. This looks like couch-surfing; intermittent stays with relatives and friends; or, in some cases, remaining in unsafe situations solely to retain some form of shelter. With the onset of the pandemic, COVID-19 exacerbated the invisibility of youth homelessness with a decrease in availability of crisis housing beds, making it more difficult to identify where youth were staying to avoid unsheltered and street homelessness.

Figure 1: Census Data – Clark County, Nevada



Total Population	2,265,461
Land Area (sq mi)	7,891.70
Median Houshold Income	$63,677
Median Gross Monthly Rent	$1,325
Poverty Rate	15.10%

Population by Race

Black or African American	12.7%
White	44.9%
American Indian & Alaska Native	1%
Asian	10.5%
Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Islander	0.9%
Some Other Race	15.4%
Two or More Races	14.7%

Population by Ethnicity

Hispanic or Latinx	31%

Data Source: https://data.census.gov/cedsci/profile/Clark_County,_Nevada?g=0500000US32003

The overarching goal of this assessment is to understand whether the landscape of youth homelessness in Clark County has changed since the Southern Nevada Plan to End Youth Homelessness was published, and how the community may respond to the needs of its unaccompanied young people today. When the Plan was published, the SNH 2017 point-in-time count indicated that more than 2,000 youth and young adults aged 24 or younger were experiencing homelessness in the CoC on the night the survey was conducted. That number positioned Clark County as the community with the third highest count of homeless youth in the nation, falling behind just Los Angeles and San José, California. Since that time, a variety of factors have significantly affected homelessness nationwide. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a lasting effect on individuals, communities, the economy, and more; the rental housing market has become increasingly difficult to navigate; and federal agencies are increasingly committed to reducing disparities in access and outcomes for marginalized populations.

Disclaimer: This assessment utilizes data from multiple sources and system partners to frame the issue of youth homelessness in the SNH CoC. These data sources are not comparable, and vary widely in completeness, validity, and reliability.

Who are the youth experiencing homelessness in Clark County?

Youth and young adults in Clark County experience diverse circumstances of homelessness and housing instability. Some experience what HUD refers to as literal homelessness, sleeping primarily in an emergency shelter, transitional housing program, or place not meant for human habitation. Some find places to stay for temporary periods with friends or family. Others may be unstably housed or at risk of homelessness because of other factors including child welfare or juvenile justice involvement, family conflict, or health-related issues. The following three reasons for homelessness were reported most frequently by youth who completed SNH CoC youth coordinated entry assessments between 2018 and 2021:

- Family or friends caused them to become homeless
- Violence at home between family members
- Unhealthy or abusive relationship, either at home or elsewhere

Between three and six percent of youth identified conflicts related to gender identity or sexual orientation as a reason for their lack of housing stability.

At entry into street outreach, emergency shelter, or transitional housing programs in the SNH CoC, youth are asked to report their previous place of residence. Understanding where youth are coming from prior to interacting with the homeless response system is a helpful way to strategize for upstream prevention and diversion. Between 2018 and 2021, the vast majority of youth enrollments indicate that youth were coming from their own rental housing (with no subsidy) or the home of family or friends.

Different Definitions of Youth Homelessness

Youth homelessness is defined in a number of different ways by different federal agencies. This assessment is inclusive of data that spans multiple definitions of youth homelessness, including the three below:

- The ***Department of Housing and Urban Development***, in its Final Definition of Homelessness, established four categories: Literally Homeless, At Imminent Risk of Homelessness, Homeless Under Other Federal Definition, and Fleeing or Attempting to Flee Domestic Violence.
- The ***Department of Education*** follows the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act definition. The McKinney-Vento Act defines "homeless children and youth" as individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.
- The ***Runaway and Homeless Youth Program*** addresses individuals who are "not more than 21 years of age…for whom it is not possible to live in a safe environment with a relative and who have no other safe alternative living arrangement." This definition includes only those youth who are unaccompanied by families or caregivers.

Point-in-Time Count

The point-in-time (PIT) count is a survey of sheltered and unsheltered people experiencing homelessness on a single night in January. HUD requires that CoCs conduct an annual count of people experiencing homelessness who are staying in emergency shelter, transitional housing, and safe havens on a single night. In alternating (odd-numbered) years, CoCs must also conduct a count of unsheltered people experiencing homelessness. Each count is planned, coordinated, and carried out locally.[6] It is widely accepted that the PIT is likely an undercount in most communities — especially for unaccompanied youth, who are often more transient and likely to find places to stay intermittently with friends, family, or acquaintances. The fact that the count is conducted during the month of January also means that people who are unsheltered are more likely to find temporary places to stay as a means to escape the cold.

Figure 2: Point in Time Count – Unaccompanied Youth

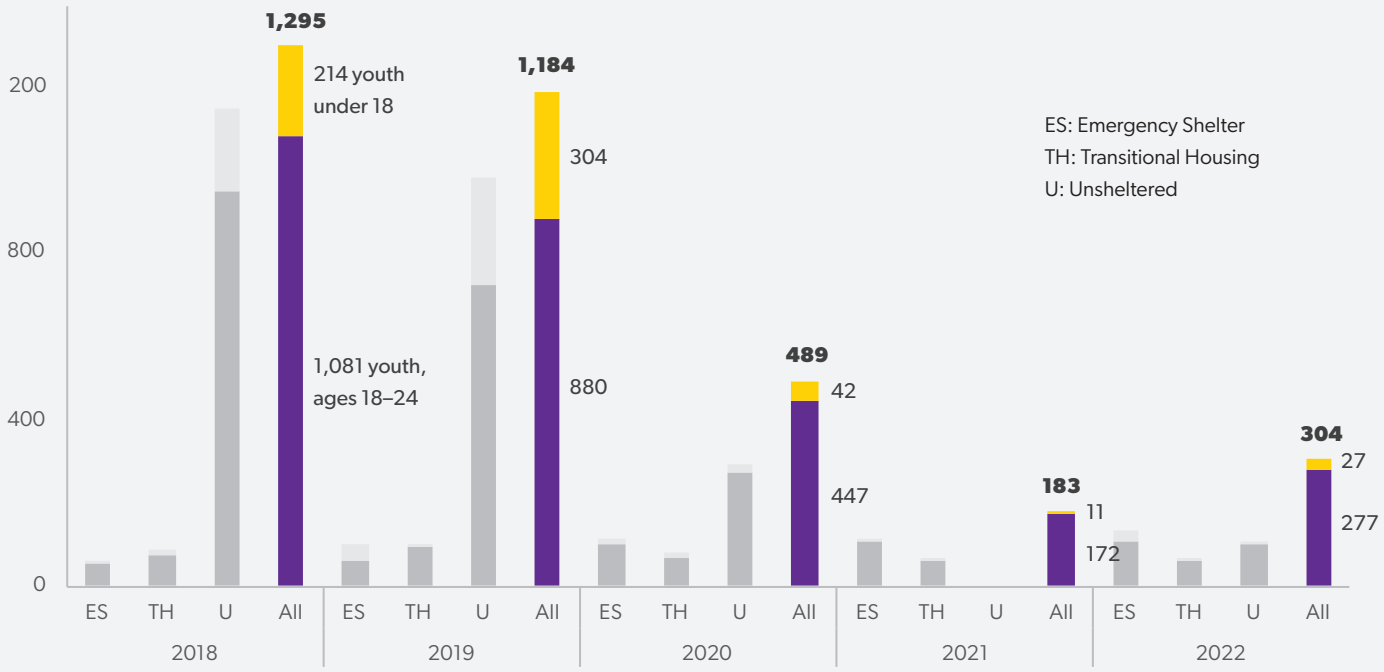
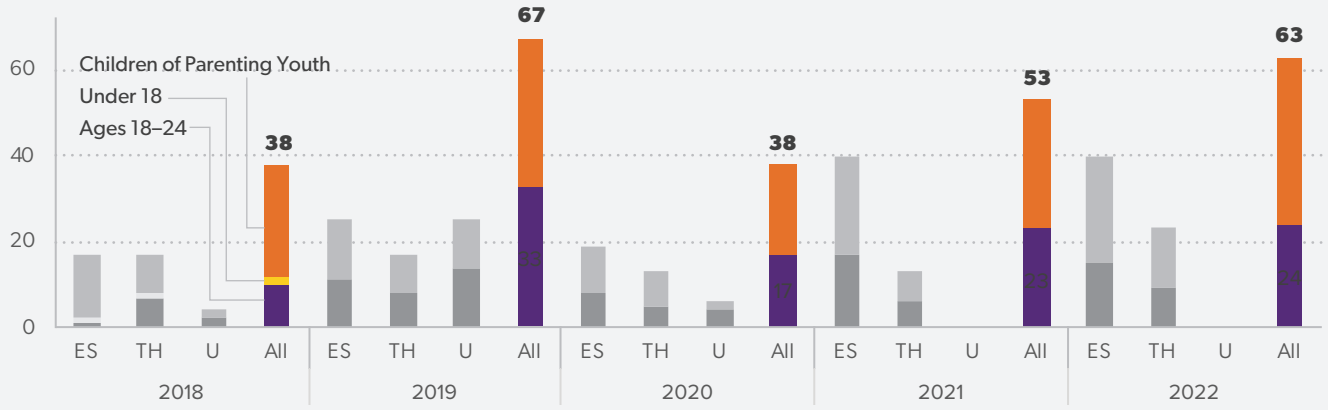


Figure 3: Point in Time Count – Pregnant & Parenting Youth



Data Source for Figures 2–3: SNH CoC (NV-500) Annual Point in Time Count, 2018–2021

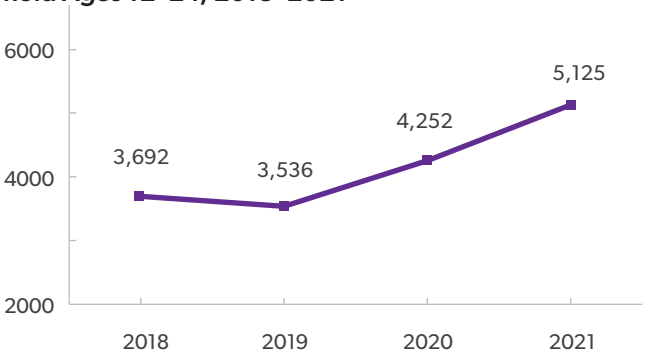
The total number of pregnant and parenting youth identified during the Point in Time Count has remained fairly consistent since 2018. There is, however, a significant decrease in the total number of unaccompanied youth from 2018 to 2022. There are likely a number of factors that contribute to this decrease, including the fact that the SNH CoC implemented a change in counting methodology during the five year time period. The decrease is not reflected in Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) data, nor in programmatic data at the service provider level.

The Homeless Management Information System

While the PIT count numbers decreased significantly, the number of youth accessing shelter and services through the CoC's homeless response system increased from 2018 to 2021 according to Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) data. HMIS data represents youth and young adults who are experiencing HUD's definition of literal homelessness: sleeping in emergency shelter, transitional housing, or places not meant for human habitation. It is important to note that HMIS data is collected through participant self-reporting. Reliability of responses may vary based on factors like the level of trust and rapport with staff asking the questions and the way that the questions are asked. This is worth particular consideration for those questions that may be more sensitive, such as those related to gender identity or sexual orientation.

Figure 4 shows the total number of youth with an HMIS enrollment in a street outreach (SO), emergency shelter (ES), or transitional housing (TH) project during each calendar year. There was a nearly 40-percent increase in the number of youth who interacted with these crisis interventions from 2018 to 2021. It is possible that the number of youth served each year was even higher, as this data does not take into account youth who may have interacted with other parts of the homeless response system without an enrollment in one of these program types. For example, youth may only visit drop-in centers, or may get connected to housing opportunities through the CoC without first having stayed in emergency shelter or transitional housing or receiving street outreach supports.

Figure 4: Youth Enrollments in HMIS, Heads of Household Ages 12–24, 2018–2021

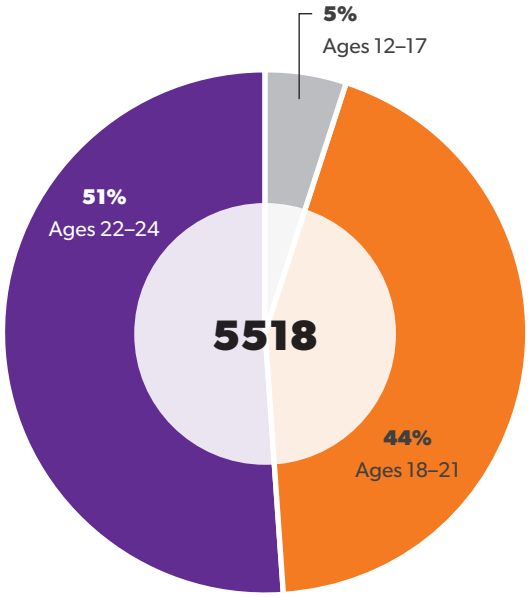


Data Source: SNH CoC (NV-500) HMIS Data, unaccompanied youth (age 12–24) enrollments in SO, ES, TH 2018–2021.

AGE

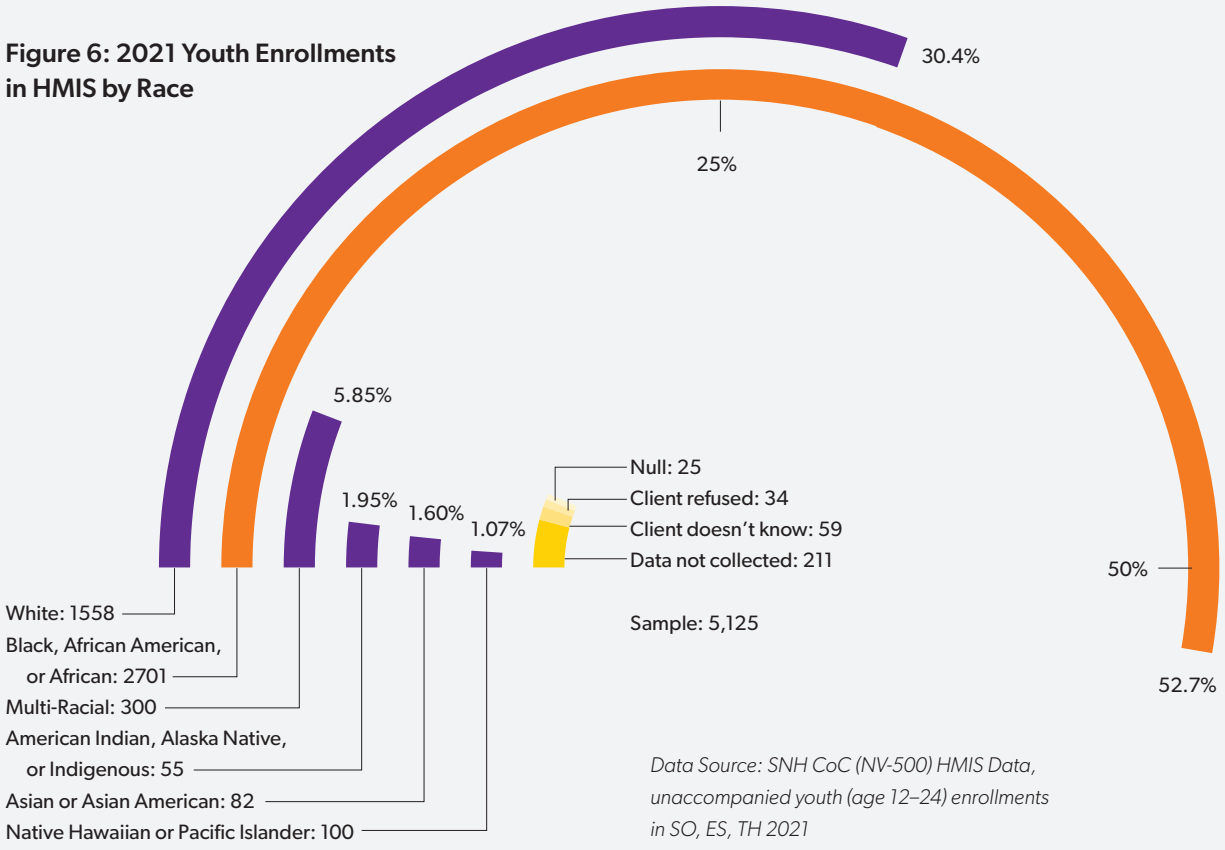
The homeless youth population includes both transition-age youth (TAY) between the ages of 18 and 24, and minors who are 17 or younger (See Figure 5). The number of unaccompanied minor heads of household has decreased each year since 2018, with youth heads of household who are 12–17 making up only five percent of the homeless youth population in 2021. However, one youth homeless services provider reported that program-level data indicated an increase in unaccompanied minors served in recent years. Because the HMIS data captured in Figure 5 is inclusive only of those minors with an enrollment in ES, TH, or SO, it is likely an undercount. Youth ages 12 to 17 have unique needs and frequently seek services and support in different places than their older counterparts.

Figure 5: 2021 Youth Enrollments in HMIS by Age



Data Source: SNH CoC (NV-500) HMIS Data, unaccompanied youth (age 12–24) enrollments in SO, ES, TH 2021.

Figure 6: 2021 Youth Enrollments in HMIS by Race



Data Source: SNH CoC (NV-500) HMIS Data, unaccompanied youth (age 12–24) enrollments in SO, ES, TH 2021

RACE AND ETHNICITY

According to the 2021 federal Annual Homeless Assessment Report, more commonly known as the AHAR, sheltered unaccompanied youth were more likely than sheltered adults to be Black. Forty-three percent of young people accessing emergency shelter identified as Black, compared to 40 percent of all individuals accessing emergency shelter.[7] Additionally, Chapin Hall found that Black and Latinx youth experience longer periods of homelessness than their white, non-Hispanic counterparts, putting them at heightened risk for returning to homelessness after exiting.[8]

There is a significant overrepresentation of Black youth in Clark County's homeless youth population. ***Black youth have made up approximately 50 percent of the homeless youth population*** each year since 2018, while Black individuals of all ages make up only 12.7 percent of the general population in the county. Youth who identify as Hispanic or Latinx have consistently represented around 20 percent of the homeless youth population each year since 2018.

Table 1: 2021 Youth Enrollments in HMIS by Ethnicity

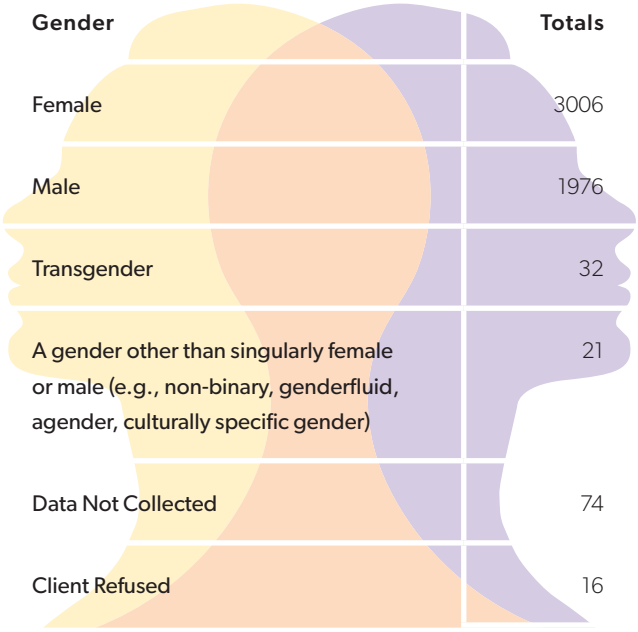
Race	Totals
Hispanic/Latinx	1075
Non-Hispanic/Non-Latinx	3823
Client Doesn't Know	13
Client Refused	18
Data Not Collected	171
Null	25

Data Source: SNH CoC (NV-500) HMIS Data, unaccompanied youth (ages 12–24) enrollments in SO, ES, TH 2021

GENDER

Female-identifying youth were represented at a higher percentage than any other gender identity each year from 2018 to 2021: between ***50 and 58 percent***. Male-identifying youth have made up between 38 and 48 percent of the homeless youth population each year. Transgender and gender-nonconforming youth have made up just under one percent of the homeless youth population each year. Nationally, 2.6 percent of young people accessing emergency shelter identified as transgender and 1.2 percent identified as gender-nonconforming, according to the 2021 AHAR. In recent years, HUD has made changes to the options from which heads of household may select their gender identity in an effort to more accurately capture the number of transgender and gender-nonconforming people experiencing homelessness. Differing from the HMIS data captured in Table 2, one youth provider described an increase in transgender and gender-nonconforming youth served from year to year according to program-level data.

Table 2: 2021 Youth Enrollments in HMIS by Gender



Gender	Totals
Female	3006
Male	1976
Transgender	32
A gender other than singularly female or male (e.g., non-binary, genderfluid, agender, culturally specific gender)	21
Data Not Collected	74
Client Refused	16

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

According to the national Voices of Youth Count survey conducted by Chapin Hall, 20 percent of young people experiencing homelessness identify as LGBTQ; or, in other words, ***LGBTQ youth are 2.2 times more likely than their peers to experience homelessness.*** Chapin Hall also points out that given the potential harm resulting from disclosure in many communities, LGBTQ data on young people should be viewed as conservative estimates. Chapin Hall found that Black youth identifying as LGBTQ had the highest risk of homelessness.[9] Data on sexual orientation is captured at project entry in HMIS for all youth who are served in Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) programming. While the sexual orientation data element has been incorporated into the enrollment screen for all projects in the SNH CoC's HMIS, most programs are not collecting the information from participants at this time.

Table 3: 2021 Youth Enrollments in HMIS by Sexual Orientation

Sexual Orientation	Totals
Null	3,418
Heterosexual	2,045
Data Not Collected	612
Bisexual	150
Client Refused	75
Gay	59
Other	56
Lesbian	44
Questioning/Unsure	32
Client Doesn't Know	13

Data Sources for Tables 2–3: SNH CoC (NV-500) HMIS Data, unaccompanied youth (ages 12–24) enrollments in SO, ES, TH 2021.

CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

Chronic homelessness is defined by the experience of long-term homelessness coupled with a disabling condition. HUD defines it more specifically as at least 12 months of literal homelessness, or experiencing homelessness on at least four separate occasions in the last three years, as long as the combined occasions equal at least 12 months and each break in homelessness separating the occasions included at least seven consecutive nights of not living as described. Because of the way that most youth experience homelessness, with frequent bouts of couch surfing or finding places to stay where they are undetected, it is difficult to

establish chronicity. However, the number of chronically homeless youth identified at project entry each year in Clark County is not insignificant, and ***increased by 37 percent from 2018 to 2021***.

Table 4: Chronically Homeless Youth at Project Enrollment

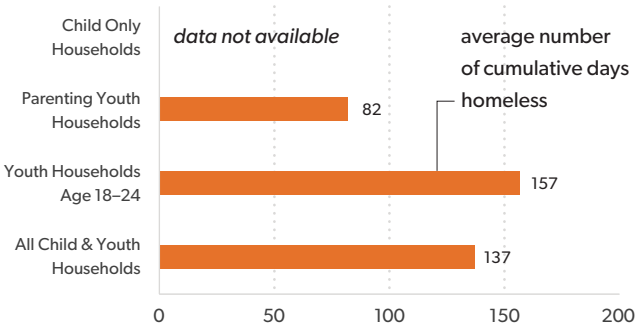
Homeless Status	2018	2019	2020	2021
Chronically Homeless	179	236	296	427
Not Chronically Homeless	3,595	3,424	4,105	4,943

Data Source: SNH CoC (NV-500) HMIS Data, unaccompanied youth (age 12–24) enrollments in SO, ES, TH 2021

In addition to pulling data directly out of HMIS, CoCs have access to a report called the Longitudinal Systems Analysis (LSA) report. The LSA, produced from a CoC's HMIS, and submitted annually to HUD via the HDX 2.0, provides HUD and CoCs with critical information about how people experiencing homelessness use their system of care.

According to the most recent Longitudinal System Analysis (LSA) reporting period (10/1/2020 through 9/30/2021), 71 percent of youth with an enrollment in ES, TH, rapid rehousing (RRH), or permanent supportive housing (PSH) were experiencing homelessness for the first time. Sixteen percent were identified as continuously homeless from a previous reporting period. Figure 7 shows that the majority of youth who interact with the SNH CoC have shorter periods of documented homelessness.

Figure 7: Longitudinal System Analysis Data, Reporting Period (October 1, 2020 – September 30, 2021)



Data Source: SNH CoC (NV-500) LSA Data, Stella P in HDX 2.0, October 1, 2020 – September 30, 2021

Clark County School District

The Clark County School District is the fifth largest in the nation, educating over 300,000 students annually. Part of its Title I programming includes the Homeless Outreach Program for Education (HOPE). Title 1 HOPE works to remove barriers for students experiencing homelessness and provides a number of services and supports to those youth and their families. It also serves as the program through which data on homeless students is collected. Teachers, guidance counselors, coaches, and other school staff are often some of the first people in a young person's life to whom they disclose their homelessness. This makes school districts an essential partner in the work to prevent and end youth homelessness.

School districts nationwide utilize the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act definition of youth homelessness, which is the broadest in nature, recognizing both youth who are experiencing literal homelessness and those who are doubled up or couch surfing. In the Clark County School District, homeless youth are identified in a number of ways. First, online registration for each school year includes a question about a student's current living situation. The responses are coded in a way that allows Title I HOPE to identify which youth are homeless at enrollment. For example, if a hotel is selected as the current living situation, the student would be identified as homeless. In addition to annual regis-

tration, a student may disclose homelessness at any point in the school year. In that case, they would be connected to Title I HOPE services and their information would be added to the program's total year-end count of homeless students.

The overall number of youth experiencing homelessness in the Clark County School District has fluctuated between 10,000 and 15,000 from the 2017–2018 school year to present, making up approximately three to five percent of the total student population annually. These numbers are inclusive of those youth who are experiencing homelessness with a parent or guardian, typically referred to as family homelessness. Youth who are experiencing homelessness without a parent or guardian are classified as unaccompanied. Over the past five school years, the number of unaccompanied homeless youth is typically between two and four percent of the total number of youth identified as homeless by the district. Unaccompanied youth may identify what is referred to as a caregiver: a person over the age of 18 who has agreed to serve as the young person's point of contact for the district but who does not have any legal guardianship.

Figure 8 shows the number of unaccompanied students identified in each of the past five school years, both with and without caregivers. The significant decrease in total unaccompanied youth from School Year (SY) 2017–2018 to the following years is attributed to students identified as "awaiting foster care" no longer being coded as homeless beginning in SY 2018–2019. During the past five school years, anywhere from ***18 to 34 percent of unaccompanied homeless youth were without a caregiver each year***. Between 70 and 80 percent of unaccompanied homeless students were in grades 10–12 each year, with much smaller percentages in grades K–9.

Figure 8: Unaccompanied Youth Experiencing Homelessness

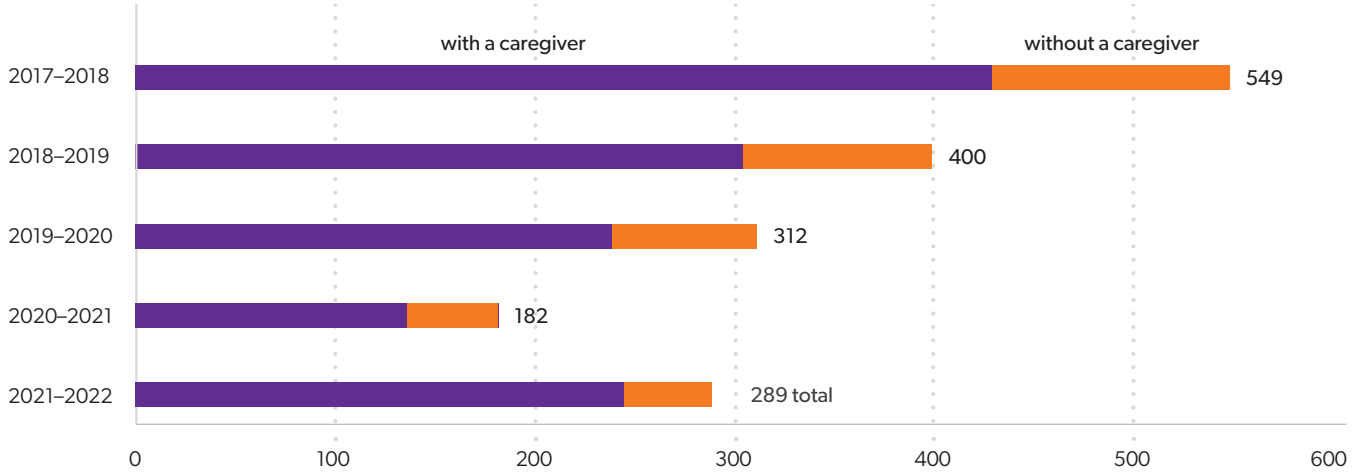
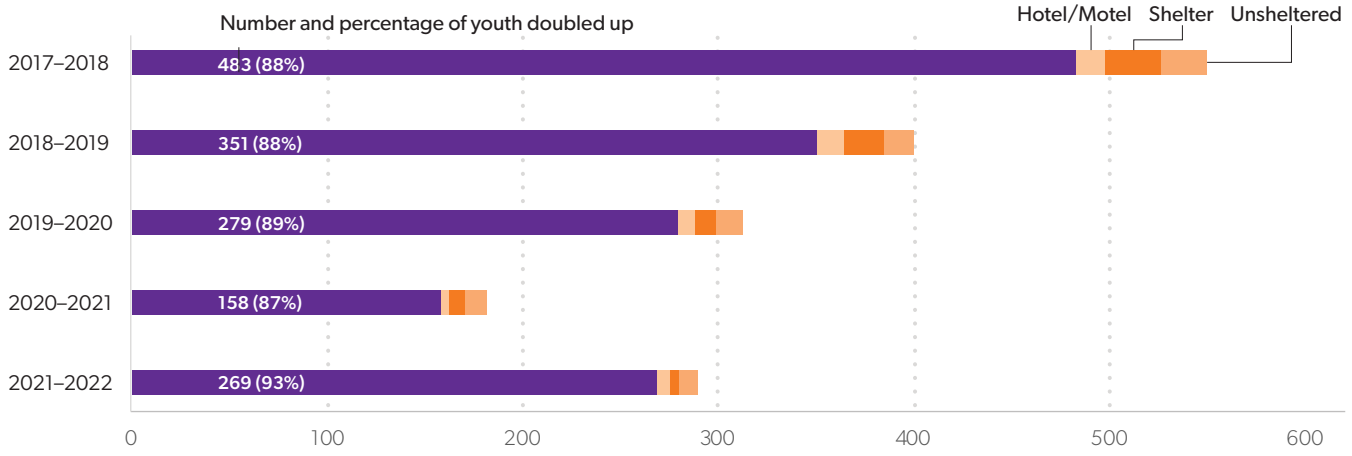


Figure 9: Living Situations of Unaccompanied Homeless Youth



Data Sources for Figures 8–9: Clark County School District, Title I HOPE Data, SY2017–2018 to SY2021–2022

Figure 9 highlights the living situations of students experiencing unaccompanied homelessness. Each year, between 87 and 93 percent of youth are doubled up, otherwise referred to as couch surfing or staying with friends and family. Finally, it is important to note that during the 2019–2020 school year, schools transitioned from in-person learning to virtual learning as of March 17, 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As virtual learning continued for the 2020–2021 school year, overall district enrollment was low and therefore affected numbers of identified students experiencing homelessness within the Clark County School District.

Every school in the district has a designated Title I HOPE Advocate on campus. These advocates provide direct support and coordinate services for students experiencing homelessness. A survey distributed to all Title I HOPE Advocates in the Clark County School District identified the following primary reasons that students experience homelessness in Clark County:

- High cost of rent, lack of affordable housing options, evictions
- Poverty, low wages, loss of employment
- Conflict in the home (especially for youth who are LGBTQ+ identifying)
- Other instability or changing circumstances in the home (e.g., parental substance use or incarceration, death in family, etc.)

Systems-Involved Youth

National data shows that child welfare and juvenile justice involved youth are at higher risk of experiencing homelessness than their peers.[10] According to the National Network for Youth, approximately 12 to 26 percent of youth who age out of the foster care system become homeless. Additionally, between 4,500 and 6,500 young people run away from their foster care placement annually, potentially ending up in unsafe situations.[11]

Similarly, a 2016 brief by the Coalition for Juvenile Justice highlights that surveys conducted with runaway and homeless youth in 11 U.S. cities revealed that nearly 44 percent had stayed in some form of detention center, nearly 78 percent had at least one interaction with the police, and nearly 62 percent had been arrested at some point in their lives.[12] These numbers are not wholly reflective of the relationship between homelessness and other systems of care, nor do they indicate fault in any one system. They do, however, point to the need for deliberate and meaningful coordination across systems to prevent homelessness among systems-involved youth whenever possible. Examining the number of youth served in these systems can also be a helpful way to understand the number of youth at potential risk of experiencing homelessness in a community.

Table 5 shows the number of youth who aged out of the foster care system in Clark County, which remained fairly consistent between 2018 and 2021. Additionally, it highlights the fact that each year, seven to twelve percent of youth who aged out were either identified as having run away or had no known exit destination.

> ***It takes a village to build a person up. Not everyone comes from a good home with parents, and incredible mentors keep me going.***
>
> *— Youth focus group participant on Lived Experience*

Table 5: Clark County Foster Care System Involvement

Year	Total # Youth Who Aged Out of Foster Care	Total # of Youth Aging out with Unknown Destination (e.g., Runaway)
2018	104	9
2019	132	13
2020	135	17
2021	131	10

Data Source: Clark County Department of Family Services, Foster Care Exit Data, 2018-2021

In Clark County, youth aging out of the foster care system have the option to participate in Step Up, a young adult program operated by Clark County Social Service. Step Up offers case management and financial assistance with the goal of assisting young people to achieve their education, employment, and housing goals with an outcome of stability and independence. Youth must leave Step Up at the age of 21. During the 2021 calendar year, a total of 387 youth were actively enrolled in Step Up's programming. In that same time period, a total of 87 young people exited Step Up's programming. Table 6 highlights the exit destinations of those youth.

Over 75 percent of youth were discharged to a permanent housing destination. That said, multiple stakeholder interviews indicated that it is not uncommon for a youth to experience homelessness *while enrolled* in Step Up's programming for a variety of reasons. In these instances, case managers focus on helping youth to obtain safe and stable housing.

Unlike the relatively consistent numbers of youth aging out of foster care from year to year, Clark County has seen a decrease in the number of youth served by the Department of Juvenile Justice Services (DJJS) over the past couple of years. Figure 10 shows the number of referrals to DJJS as well as the distinct number of youth actually served by the system each year. From 2019 to 2021, there was ***a decrease of nearly 55 percent in youth served by the system***. While the data is not conclusive, one potential factor contributing to this decrease may be the establishment of Clark County's five youth diversion centers, otherwise referred to as The Harbor. The Harbor offers diversion programming targeted to youth with low-level offenses to help decrease the number of youth who end up in DJJS custody. Some of the most common offenses seen by The Harbor's locations include possession of marijuana, battery/fighting, domestic violence, and possession of drug paraphernalia.

While DJJS does not yet have a standardized method for identifying youth who are experiencing homelessness, it has nevertheless collected this information informally. If a young person states that they are homeless, it is noted and tracked; however, there is no formal intake question or approach to gathering this information from youth across the system.

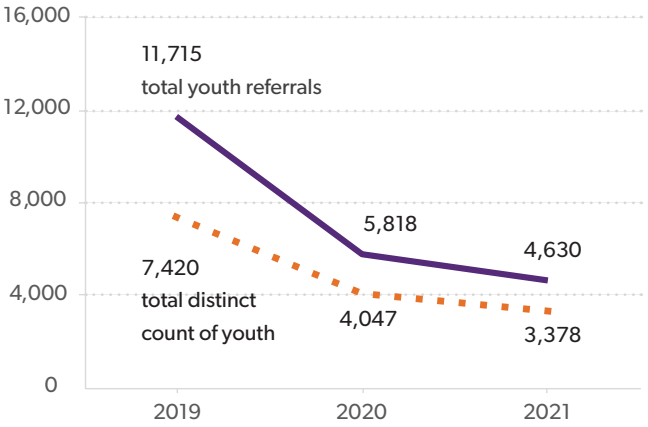
Table 7 on the following page shows the number of youth who disclosed a homeless status at some point during their enrollment in DJJS services. It is highly likely that these numbers are an undercount.

Table 6: Exit Destinations for Step Up Youth

Exit Destinations	Number of Youth
Permanent housing	68
Temporary destination	12
Long-term care facility	2
Residential project (no homeless criteria)	1
Other destination	2
No exit interview completed	2
Total Exits	87

Data Source: Clark County Social Service, Step Up Program Exit Data, 2021

Figure 10: Total Youth Served by the Department of Juvenile Justice Services



Data Source: *Clark County Department of Juvenile Justice Services, youth served 2019–2021*

Table 7: Total Homeless Youth Served by the Department of Juvenile Justice Services

Year	Number of Youth
2018	30
2019	27
2020	23
2021	11

Data Source: Clark County Department of Juvenile Justice Services, self-identified homeless youth served 2018–2021

This assumption can be made based on a number of factors, including: there is no standard protocol for collecting the information in Clark County currently; focus group findings indicate that young people in general are not comfortable disclosing homelessness to law enforcement, for fear of getting in trouble; and national data points to a more significant intersection between homelessness and juvenile justice involvement.

According to research compiled by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2019 data shows that "Black and Native American youth were far more likely to be confined in court-ordered out-of-home placements than other youth. Black youth were also more likely to end up in custody — over 16 times more likely than their Asian and Pacific Islander peers; four times more likely than their white peers; and three times more likely than their Hispanic peers."[13] In Clark County, Black youth made up more than 50 percent of the homeless youth reported in Table 7 each year. Additionally, Black and Latinx youth made up just over 70 percent of all youth referred to DJJS each year from 2018 to 2020. This overrepresentation of youth of color is important to examine, as Clark County considers racial equity in its homeless response system and other intersecting systems of care.

Finally, youth who are served by RHY programming are asked at the time of their enrollment about child welfare and juvenile justice involvement. While the number of youth served in RHY programming is a small percentage of the youth experiencing homelessness overall in Clark County, the numbers are still telling. For example, 35 percent of enrollments into RHY programming in 2021 confirmed child welfare involvement, highlighting the connection between systems involvement and youth homelessness. That percentage fluctuated between 20 and 28 percent from 2018 to 2020. Just 12 percent of enrollments into RHY programming in 2021 confirmed juvenile justice involvement. This is consistent with the numbers from 2018 and 2019, but slightly lower than the 20 percent of enrollments confirming juvenile justice involvement in 2020.

Youth and Violence

Homelessness may not always present as straightforwardly as an unsheltered or street homeless experience. Situations like living with an abusive partner or family member can be harder for youth to interpret as a form of homelessness. Youth may not always disclose situations of abuse to providers for fear of further system involvement. Oftentimes youth need an established relationship formed in trust before mentioning abuse or violence in the home. In the most recent LSA reporting period (10/1/2020 through 9/30/2021), out of the total 1,335 youth and young adults who had an enrollment in ES, TH, RRH, or PSH, 113 youth (8 percent) reported being survivors of domestic violence (DV) who were actively fleeing and 209 (16 percent) reported being survivors of DV but not currently fleeing.

Table 8 (next page) shows that between ***27 and 30 percent*** of SN Youth Assessment respondents report unhealthy or abusive relationships at home or elsewhere as a reason for their lack of stable housing. Additionally, 17 to 20 percent of youth assessed reported violence at home between family members as a reason for lack of stable housing each year. Abuse or neglect at home is often the reason that youth end up on the streets. Homeless youth often have few or no support systems, and those being abused in a relationship may find it more difficult to leave their abusive partner if they have no one to help them understand what is happening or the options available to them.[14]

> ***"Homeless youth often have few or no support systems, and those being abused in a relationship may find it more difficult to leave their abusive partner if they have no one to help them understand what is happening.***

Table 8: Reason for Lack of Stable Housing

Reason	Assessment Year			
	2018	2019	2020	2021
Violence at home between family members	141	141	138	165
Unhealthy or abusive relationship, either at home or elsewhere	201	213	200	268
Ran away from family home, group home, or foster home	57	51	59	86
Family or friends caused you to become homeless	233	241	221	279
Difference in religious or cultural believe from parents, guardian, or caregiver	34	40	63	111
Conflicts around gender identity or sexual orientation	33	28	42	41

Data Source: SNH CoC (NV-500) Coordinated Entry Assessment Data, Youth Heads of Household Ages 12–24

Exploited and Trafficked Youth

Human trafficking transcends demographic categories. Its survivors span the spectrum of race, class, and geography. However, some populations are at greater risk for trafficking than others, and runaway and homeless youth are among the most vulnerable. Youth who run away are at considerable risk of homelessness and victimization, including through sex and labor trafficking.[15] A study conducted by Loyola University New Orleans stated that a confluence of factors made homeless youth vulnerable to both sex and labor traffickers who preyed on their basic needs. Researchers interviewed 641 runaway and homeless youth participants. Of those, youth they found:

- 19 percent experienced some form of trafficking
- 14 percent had been involved in sex trafficking
- 8 percent had been involved in labor trafficking
- 3 percent had been involved in both sex and labor trafficking
- 91 percent had been approached by someone offering an opportunity that was "too good to be true."[16]

The Embracing Project (TEP) is a Las Vegas-area agency that serves youth survivors of violence, sexual exploitation, and sex trafficking. On average, over 300 youth utilize TEP's services annually. Many of the youth who utilize these services leave home or are kicked out of home due to abuse. They frequently couch-surf and eventually wear out their welcome with friends. Youth then end up staying in less safe situations with acquaintances or strangers who may exploit them for the place to stay. During a stakeholder interview, TEP staff shared that this was a common occurrence based on their experience with the population. They explained that youth in this vulnerable position are more open to what they perceive as the kindness of strangers, who then exploit them or recruit them into sex work.

The data captured in Table 9 (next page) is representative only of youth who were served in RHY programming, a very small portion of the CoC's housing and services portfolio.

Table 9: Commercial Sexual Exploitation/Sex Trafficking and Labor Exploitation/Trafficking at Project Exit

Year	Commercial/Sexual Exploitation/ Sex Trafficking at Project Exit		Labor Exploitation/ Trafficking at Project Exit	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
2018	14	350	13	355
2019	22	467	23	467
2020	20	352	23	350
2021	4	305	8	301

Data Source: SN Movement to End Youth Homelessness- Exit Data; Age of HoH is in range [12, 24]; RHY Data - R15 Commercial Sexual Exploitation/ Sex Trafficking AND R16 Labor Exploitation/Trafficking

The data captured in Table 9 is representative only of youth who were served in RHY programming, a very small portion of the CoC's housing and services portfolio. As a result, it almost certainly an undercount of the youth and young adults who have had some experience of trafficking or exploitation.

What are the needs of youth experiencing homelessness in Clark County?

This assessment is not inclusive of *all* of the many needs of youth and young adults experiencing or at risk of homelessness in Clark County. The quantitative data collected during this assessment process highlighted housing and health-related needs specifically; however, focus groups conducted with youth in Clark County elevated a variety of other important needs as well (in no strategic order):

- **Opportunities for joy**
- **Access to transportation**
- **Access to food**
- **Access to electricity (for example, to charge a cell phone)**
- **Access to clothing and beauty supplies, especially culturally specific products and services**
- **Access to birth control and menstrual products**
- **Support with collecting documentation (for example, state ID, birth certificate)**
- **Safe places to store belongings without fear of theft**
- **Better wages**
- **More/better access to supportive adults/ case management**
- **Housing**

Housing

The lack of access to safe and affordable housing for youth and young adults was a recurring theme throughout the data collection for this assessment. Youth focus group participants highlighted the disparity between the low wages they often earn and the skyrocketing cost of rent in the county, the difficulty of finding apartments in neighborhoods that feel safe, unreasonable requirements set by prospective landlords, and long waits for housing through the CoC's coordinated entry system. Adult partners who participated in stakeholder interviews reinforced many of the same challenges. The SNH CoC has a limited number of youth-dedicated beds, as shown below in Table 10.

Table 10: Housing Inventory Count – Youth-Dedicated Beds

Housing Type	2018	2019	2020	2021
Emergency Shelter	57	40	117	102
Transitional Housing	126	119	92	93
Rapid Rehousing	42	53	116	58
Permanent Supportive Housing	41	0	1	0

Housing Type	2018	2019	2020	2021
Other Permanent Housing	6	6	6	6
Total Youth-dedicated Beds	272	218	332	259

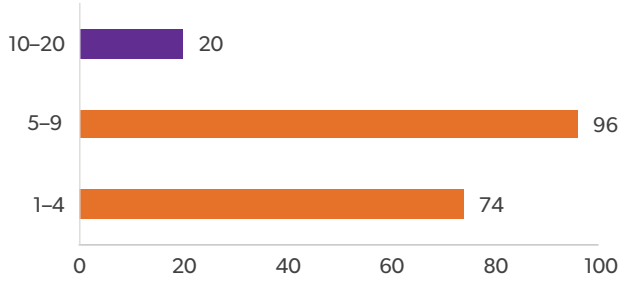
Data Source for Table 10: SNH CoC (NV-500) Annual Housing Inventory Count, 2018–2021

The SNH CoC coordinated entry system utilizes three different assessment approaches to prioritize households for housing resources: the Community Housing Assessment Tool (CHAT), the Family CHAT, and the Transitional Age Youth (TAY) Vulnerability Index and Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VISPDAT). The CHAT is a community-developed tool that assesses the housing needs of adults without children over the age of 24 and the Family CHAT assesses households with minor children based on acuity and chronicity. The TAY VI-SPDAT is an evidence-based, nationally-utilized tool that is used to determine the most appropriate housing intervention by assessing level of need, risk and vulnerability through a scoring mechanism. Based on answers and key identifying factors, a score and category of homelessness generates. A combination of the TAY Triage Tool and the VI-SPDAT that predicts which youth are most likely to experience long-term homelessness, and prioritizes youth who are on a trajectory to becoming chronically homeless adults.

In general, transition-aged youth are eligible for the full inventory of housing accessible through the CoC's coordinated entry system; however, many CoCs utilize a prioritization approach that puts adults experiencing homelessness at an advantage. A young person's experience of homelessness often looks different than an older adult's experience, making it harder to document chronicity or to meet certain criteria for housing dedicated to people experiencing homelessness. For example, of the 337 youth ages 12 to 24 who are currently in the CoC's community queue, 19 percent report a location they sleep in most frequently that would make them ineligible for most housing that requires participants to meet HUD's homelessness definition (e.g., doubled up or couch surfing).

According to HMIS data, a total of 1,018 youth households exited the homeless response system in the most recent LSA reporting period, 10/1/2020 through 9/30/2021. Only 32 percent (327) of those youth went to a permanent destination. Of that 32 percent, 203 youth households went to live with friends or family while only 124 moved into their own rental situation. Only 42 of those youth households exiting the homeless system moved into rental housing with some sort of rental assistance or supportive services. The remaining exits during this reporting period were to temporary destinations (26 percent) or unknown destinations (42 percent).

Figure 11: TAY VI-SPDAT Score Ranges for Youth Currently in Community Queue



Data Source: SNH CoC (NV-500) HMIS Data, coordinated entry assessment score ranges for unaccompanied youth on community queue at present

When examining racial equity and housing outcomes, Black youth made up 51 percent of the total 1,018 youth households who exited during the reporting period described above, which is comparable to the percentage of Black youth in the overall homeless youth population. Thirty-four percent of Black youth exited to permanent destinations, 24 percent to temporary destinations, and 42 percent to unknown destinations.

A total of 1,335 youth households were actively enrolled in emergency shelter, transitional housing, RRH, PSH, or a combination of these program types at some point during the reporting period described above. Of that total, only 146 youth were enrolled in RRH and 1 youth in PSH. The vast majority of youth were served only in emergency shelter or transitional housing, many then exiting to other temporary or unknown destinations.

Figure 11 shows that of those youth currently in the community queue who were assessed using the TAY VI-SPDAT (as opposed to the CHAT or Family CHAT), ***the overwhelming majority were assigned a score between 1 and 9***.

While the data in this bar chart is extracted from HMIS and organized by ranges that differ slightly from the tool's recommendations for level of assistance by score, it is still clear that the majority of youth currently in the queue would likely benefit from the first or second level of assistance described by the VI-SPDAT categories below:

1. Score 0–3: no moderate or high intensity services to be provided at this time
2. Score 4–7: assessment for time-limited supports with moderate intensity
3. Score 8–30: assessment for long-term housing with high service intensity

This may be considered an indicator that the majority of youth in need of a housing opportunity in Clark County today would benefit from some level of rental assistance and supportive services that meet their unique needs as young people, with the ultimate goal of maintaining housing stability independently at the end of the assistance (e.g., via a rapid rehousing intervention designed for youth).

Stakeholder interviews and focus groups yielded the following observations on coordinated entry:

- Lack of clarity and transparency in how the community queue works, and how long it will likely take youth to be offered a housing opportunity (if at all)
- Unclear as to whether there are standards for when youth are assessed and added to the community queue — some youth reported having had to ask for an assessment rather than being approached proactively while in shelter or on the street
- Lack of case conferencing or advance notice that a youth may be nearing the top of the queue, which makes it difficult for provider staff to locate those youth in a timely manner, support them to become document-ready, etc
- Period of time in which youth are expected to be located and then accept a housing referral is not long enough

Table 11 shows the destinations for youth ages 12–24 who exited street outreach, emergency shelter, or transitional housing projects during each calendar year.

Table 11: Exit Destinations from Street Outreach, Emergency Shelter, and Transitional Housing Enrollment

Exit Destinations	2018	2019	2020	2021
Rental by client, no ongoing housing subsidy	703	418	727	1547
No exit interview completed	98	176	219	584
Staying or living with family, permanent tenure	609	550	412	326
Other	297	338	350	403
Data not collected	373	488	452	406
Transitional housing for homeless persons	187	250	223	204
Emergency shelter	122	286	226	172
Staying or living with friends, permanent tenure	218	173	139	101
Staying or living with family, temporary tenure	219	236	193	130
Staying or living with friends, temporary tenure	222	291	217	125
Place not meant for human habitation	38	90	119	87

Exit Destinations	2018	2019	2020	2021
Rental by client with RRH or equivalent subsidy	9	27	33	84
Rental by client with other ongoing housing subsidy	55	43	33	47
Rental by client in a public housing unit	0	2	16	28
Jail, prison, or juvenile detention facility	79	38	35	37
Substance abuse treatment facility or detox center	39	14	29	28
Client refused	11	9	20	24
Hotel/motel paid for without emergency shelter voucher	24	37	60	23
Psychiatric hospital or other psychiatric facility	13	8	11	22
Residential project or halfway house with no homeless criteria	19	14	20	21
Hospital or other residential non-psychiatric facility	12	8	18	19
Host home (non-crisis)	0	2	13	18
Housing owned by client with no ongoing subsidy	9	7	13	18
Null	93	54	24	15
Safe Haven	2	11	2	15
Client doesn't know	2	8	17	10
Foster care home or foster care group home	10	13	6	8
Permanent housing (other than RRH) for formerly homeless persons	10	11	7	5
Housing owned by client with ongoing subsidy	2	5	3	4
Rental by client with HCV	0	4	2	5
Rental by client with VASH	0	0	1	2
Long-term care facility or nursing home	0	3	0	2

Data Source for Table 11: SNH CoC (NV-500) HMIS Data, unaccompanied youth (age 12-24) exit destinations from SO, ES, TH 2018–2021

Takeaways from Table 11:

- The number of exits to rental housing with no ongoing subsidy more than doubled from 2018 to 2021.
- The number of exits without completion of an exit interview increased significantly in 2021, and the number of exits with data not collected is consistently high across all years.
- The most common permanent housing destinations at project exit were consistently rental housing with no subsidy and staying with friends or family, potentially indicating that the vast majority of youth exited projects without ongoing supports.
- The proportion of exits to family and friends (both permanent and temporary tenure) decreased from 35 percent in 2018 to 15 percent in 2021.
- The number of exits to a rental with RRH or equivalent assistance, while still low overall, increased from just 9 in 2018 to 84 in 2021.
- There is a significant number of exits to 'other' — what could this response indicate?

Examination of recidivism rates in this same time period is another helpful method for identifying the housing needs of Clark County's homeless and at-risk youth. Table 12 shows that the highest rates of return to homelessness occurred in the first six months and after two years.

Table 12: Youth Head of Household Exits and Returns to Homelessness from Permanent Destination

Project Exit Year	Number of Youth HoH...	Returns to Homelessness			
	Exited to a Permanent Destination	in less than 6 months	from 6–12 months	from 13–24 months	after 24 months
2018	1,986	105	55	62	211
2019	1,514	118	41	64	215
2020	1,508	131	50	65	236
2021	2,247	185	62	13	248

Data Source: SNH CoC (NV-500) HMIS Data, unaccompanied youth (age 12-24) recidivism data from enrollments in SO, ES, TH 2018–2021

Physical and Mental Health

The trauma of homelessness can have a significant impact on the physical and mental health of young people. Despite the fact that youth experiencing homelessness have higher rates of mental health challenges than their peers in stable housing, they often encounter many barriers to health care access. One common barrier is health insurance enrollment. For example, nearly 60 percent of youth reported that they had no health insurance at their time of enrollment into a project in the CoC's HMIS during the 2021 calendar year. This percentage is significantly higher than previous years — with the total number of youth reporting that they were uninsured ranging from 20 to 35 percent in 2018, 2019, and 2020.

Youth who are assessed using the TAY VI-SPDAT are asked whether they ever had trouble maintaining housing, or have been kicked out of an apartment, shelter program, or other place they were staying, because of a mental health issue, a past head injury, or a learning disability, developmental disability, or other impairment. The number of youth who answered 'yes' to this question has increased over the past four years. From 2018 to 2021, there was a 130-percent increase in the number of youth who reported a learning disability, developmental disability, or other impairment as the reason they had trouble maintaining housing. Similarly, there was an 87-percent increase from 2018 to 2021 in youth

who reported a past head injury and a 24-percent increase in youth who reported mental health as factors contributing to their housing instability.

Table 13 reflects the responses to health-related questions at project enrollment in 2021. There was no significant increase or decrease from 2018 to 2021 in the number of youth reporting these health conditions at project enrollment. However, stakeholder interviews conducted with youth-serving providers indicated an increase in young people with mental health and substance use challenges. This discrepancy between HMIS data and provider experience may be linked to the fact that health data is self-reported in HMIS. Youth may not always feel comfortable disclosing certain health conditions. Providers may also vary in how staff approach this type of data collection with youth, leading to some collecting more reliable data than others. For example, when there is opportunity to build trust and rapport between a provider and a young person before the young person is asked to share personal information, they may be more likely to report accurately. Of those youth assessed using the TAY VI-SPDAT from 2018 to 2021, three to eight percent each year reported that they had to leave an apartment, shelter program, or other place they were staying because of their physical health. Between eight and fifteen percent reported that their drinking or drug use led them to be kicked out of an apartment or program where they were staying in the past.

Table 13: Health Conditions and Health Status at Project Enrollment (PE) in 2021

Response	Chronic Health Condition at PE	Developmental Condition at PE	HIV/AIDS Status at PE	Mental Health Condition at PE	Physical Disability Status at PE	No. of Substance Use Disorders at PE
Yes	362	358	351	938	303	—
(Drug Use Disorder)	—	—	—	—	—	579
(Alcohol Use Disorder)	—	—	—	—	—	61
(Both)	—	—	—	—	—	256
No	2,583	2,568	2,604	2,061	2,746	2,178
Null	3,221	3,223	3,315	3,224	3,221	3,221
Client Refused	29	30	22	26	28	24
Client Doesn't Know	9	17	11	21	6	7
Data Not Collected	312	308	39	326	129	319

Data Source: SNH CoC (NV-500) HMIS Data, unaccompanied youth (age 12–24) enrollments in SO, ES, TH 2021

Key Findings & Conclusions

The data collected and analyzed during this process points to a number of key takeaways and questions for the SNH CoC to consider in the next phase of this work:

- Thousands of youth continue to experience various forms homelessness and housing instability, and to interact with the homeless response system each year.
- Black youth in Clark County are disproportionately likely to experience homelessness.
- The majority of youth exiting the CoC's homeless response system, including those who are assessed for resources through coordinated entry, are not exiting to permanent housing through the CoC's housing inventory.
- Based on the SNH CoC coordinated entry assessment approach, most youth are scoring in a range that does not qualify them as households with the highest level of need. This often creates a swell of people in the "middle" range of a CE system's prioritization list. Youth who are scoring in the middle range have limited access to housing resources because the limited housing inventory is prioritized for those youth who meet the most prioritization criteria.
- Poverty (including generational poverty) and a difficult housing market are significant factors in the issue of youth homelessness in Clark County.
- Youth and the systems that serve them will benefit from increased coordination, collaboration, and data-sharing between the many systems and partners that interact with youth experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

This assessment confirms that youth homelessness is a persistent crisis in Clark County. With the dedicated members of the CQI team, investment from local leadership, a community of passionate youth-serving providers, and the voices of youth with lived expertise at the forefront, preventing and ending youth homelessness is not a pipe dream. While the challenges are great, and the need for more affordable housing is an indisputable barrier, the SNH CoC has before it numerous opportunities to make a significant impact on the lives of homeless and at-risk youth and young adults in Clark County today.

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